GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2192
ANSWERED ON:14.03.2007
TELECOM SERVICE IN RURAL AREAS
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the share of telecom service being provided by the private telecom companies in the rural areas of the country during the current financial year;

(b) whether the Government has received any proposal from the private telecom companies to extend their telecom services in the rural areas;

(c) if so, the details thereof and action taken by the Government thereon;

(d) whether the private telecom companies are providing satisfactory services in the rural areas; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) As per License condition of private telecom access providers, there is no obligation to provide service in rural areas. Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is, however, providing subsidy to all service providers including service providers in private sector for provision of telecom services in rural areas as per details given below:

(i) USOF has entered into an agreement with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Reliance Infocom Ltd. (RIL) in September, 2004 for provision of 46,253 Rural Community Phones (RCPs) in villages with population more than 2000 and where there are no Public Call Offices (PCOs). As on 31st January, 2007 BSNL has provided 36,338 RCPs where as RIL has provided 15,531 RCPs. During the current financial year, RIL has provided 6,581 RCPs till January, 2007.

(ii) USOF has also entered into an agreement with BSNL, RIL and Tata Tele Services Limited (TTL) and Tata Tele Services Limited (Maharashtra) in March, 2005 for provision of Rural Household Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) on demand in 1,267; 203; 172 and 43 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) respectively. A total of 17,12,530 RDELs have been provided so far. Out of this, the share of BSNL, RIL, TTL and TTL (MH) is 6,08,039; 4,64,276; 5,00,023 and 1,40,192 respectively as on 31-01-2007. During the current financial year, the total of 13,06,908 RDELs have been provided as on 31-01-2007 with a share of 2,64,804; 4,32,552; 4,73,057 and 1,36,495 for BSNL, RIL, TTL, and TTL (MH) respectively.

(b) & (c) Government is in the process of taking necessary action to provide support for provision of infrastructure for mobile services including Wireless Access Services like Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) using fixed/Mobile Terminal in rural and remote areas of the country. The infrastructure shall be created in those specified areas where there is no existing fixed/wireless mobile coverage. Tender document for this purpose has already been issued on 18.1.2007 and placed on the Department of Telecommunications website for inviting bids from the stakeholders. The bids have since been received and are in the process of evaluation.

(d) & (e) All the service providers have to ensure the Quality of Service (QoS) as prescribed by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) from time to time. TRAI publishes QoS details of various service providers on quarterly basis, these can be accessed on TRAI's Website (www.trai.gov.in).